

BRANCHING OUT

Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence

Winter 2007

Volume 1, Issue 2

The Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence

By Terri DeWalt



Welcome to the second edition of our new community newsletter,
Branching Out- Creating Connections to End Sexual Violence.

This time around I am going to tell you more about an aspect of our program that is very close to my heart, our prevention program. Sexual Assault Services, which is a program of Lutheran Social Services of WI and Upper MI, Inc., has a half-time position that is dedicated to the primary prevention of sexual violence in Racine County. The position is funded by the Rape Prevention Education grant out of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, which is funneled through the Department of Health and Family Services from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (Did you catch that? It looks like this: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention gives money to→Department of Health and Family Services who gives money

to→ the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault who gives money to Sexual Assault Services → ☺).

The prevention program began in 1997 as a collaboration between what was then the Racine Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (now, Focus on Community) and our sister program, Stop Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN). During the first few years, the program was provided with Focus on Community's Teen Peers and presented to 8th and 9th grade students over two class periods. The program focused on helping students reduce their risk of becoming sexually harassed or victimized and helped the students know what to do if they, or someone they knew, was sexually assaulted or harassed. The prevention education program was integrated into SAS in 2002, and continued as an hour and a half long program provided to schools in eastern and western Racine County.

However, in 2006 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) required that the Rape Prevention Education funds begin to incorporate primary prevention strategies, and in November 2007, the CDC mandated that the program be 100% primary prevention. This change is the result of research that shows that it is simply not possible to effectively prevent sexual violence in short, one-time presentations.

While this change is something that we wholeheartedly agree with, and support, it does significantly change the focus of the program. Primary prevention involves identifying the root causes of sexual violence and then changing the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to those causes. In order to discuss such a complicated issue, we need an extensive amount of time with the kids. Instead of working with thousands of kids a year for an hour and a half, we will now be working with far fewer kids over an extended period of time. The program is now an intensive 8-week educational group working with 6-8 kids at a time. The group focuses on developing positive leadership skills, healthy relationships, healthy patterns of communication and discussing the social norms that allow sexual violence to happen. The groups are provided in middle and high schools, as well as in community groups and incorporate a wide range of interactive activities and discussions. So far the group has been provided with great success in one middle school and in a community based group.

If your school or organization is looking for a positive group experience for youth and would like to learn more about this free program, please contact me at tdewalt@lsswis.org or 619-1634.

— Terri

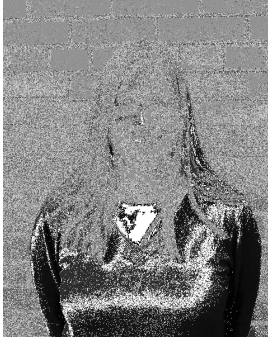
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Face To Face

By Lora Schultz Reinders

In September we lost a great leader in the field of sexual trauma recovery. Jan Hindman died unexpectedly at her home in Oregon. Jan had worked in the field of sexual trauma recovery for over 30 years, and was viewed as a pioneer in the field. She has written several books on sexual victimization as well as a wonderful children's book entitled "A Very Touching Book." I have heard Jan speak several times, and have read several of her books. In honor of her work I wanted to share with you her contribution to this field, as well as report on what I have learned from her personally and professionally.

Jan's research, documented in her book "Just Before Dawn," helps us to learn more about trauma, and to see that the way trauma is often viewed is not always grounded in the true experience of the victim. Many people view trauma through the lens of what Jan calls "the big four." The "big four" refers to: "frequency," "age," "violence," and "penetration." Most people believe that the younger the victim, the more often the abuse occurred, if the abuse was violent, and if there was penetration (rather than "just fondling") results in greater trauma to the victim. Jan's research gives us insight into the validity of this belief.

A research study involving 282 adults who had been sexually abused as children were assessed for level of trauma, and the factors affecting their trauma. Rather than violence, terror was found to be associated with increased trauma. Terror is the act of waiting in suspense, knowing abuse is coming. In regards to the issue of on-going, lengthy sexual abuse being more damaging, the study showed that it is not the length of time the abuse went on, but rather the length of time the person was alone in secrecy about the abuse. Another factor found to be significant in the development of trauma is the response of the system. The reactions of those who the victim first discloses to, as well as what occurs with the investigation and prosecution of the offender are very important factors in the level of trauma for the victim. Minimizing the abuse as "just fondling" or looking at ways the victim "asked for it" are all very damaging to the recovery of the victim. Validating the fact that the victim did not cause the abuse to happen, and that she or he was an innocent victim to a crime, can assist in healing. Jan talked about how violence can then be seen as a "badge of innocence," legitimizing that the act was *against* them, and not something they *participated* in.

Jan's study shows that another important factor that may increase the trauma response is the status of the offender. If the system legitimizes the offender as a criminal versus seeing him or her as an up-standing citizen or a subject of pity, this legitimizes the victim as being innocent. On the other side of this, we must be aware of a victim's feelings when the victim had a very close and seemingly caring relationship with the offender. In those situations, criminal prosecution of the offender can be a source of guilt and pain for the victim, and

needs to be handled very delicately. An additional factor found to be important in the experience of trauma is the level of sexual responsiveness the victim experienced when being abused. Bodies are designed to respond a certain way when sexually stimulated. This is very confusing to children and can result in their feeling ashamed about their bodies' responses. Furthermore, this creates additional confusion in the victim's mind as to his or her own innocence.

A second area Jan Hindman was a champion in was educating children. She encourages us to remember that we are sexual role models to our children; in the same way we are role models to children in other areas of their lives. In her book "There is No Sex Fairy" Jan points out that when we want our children to learn good manners, or how to do long division, we *teach* them. However, when it comes to our children's future sexual lives, many parents leave it up to chance. She discusses that sexual respect needs to be taught to children in the same manner we teach them all other things we want them to learn. This teaching needs to be comfortable and natural. She reminds us that teachable moments will present themselves! You don't have to plan for a sit down with anatomy books or a slide show. Think about how you will handle it when your eight year old comes home and asks what a condom is. Giving a simple, yet honest answer will show that you are a reliable source of information, and that it is "no big deal" to ask you such questions.

In my opinion one of Jan's most important contributions is reminding both parents and professionals to remember that sexuality, and our bodies are beautiful things. Too often children are told not to let someone touch them in "bad" places, or that sexual touch is "bad touch." When an adult touches a child sexually this is certainly "bad" and damaging, however we must also remember the messages we are sending that impact their future sexual lives. Jan prefers to educate children about "secret" touching, with "bad touch" being reserved for violence, such as hitting. She also discussed that when we talk to children about not allowing anyone to touch them in their private places, that the reason for this is because those places are extra special, not because they are nasty or dirty. One of the jokes Jan would tell in her conferences is the mixed message a child gets when they are told "don't touch yourself there, its dirty, save it for someone you love."

Changing these misconceptions about trauma were immeasurably helpful to me as a professional and gave greater insight into the need to adequately assess all victims, rather than making assumptions based on the facts of the case. It is difficult to summarize the work of a professional who has contributed so much over thirty-four years, so I have chosen aspects of her work that have influenced me the most. I invite you to learn more about her life and work through her website at www.janhindman.com.

— Lora

Call For Submissions...



If you are a survivor or you know a survivor who would like to submit a poem, short story, artwork or editorial for publication in this newsletter, please email it to Samantha Sustachek (ssustachek@lsswis.org).





Legislative Update Corner

By Vicki Biehn

When a person is sexually assaulted and goes to the hospital so that forensic evidence can be collected and to receive medical care, that person is typically required to pay for those services. In fact, sexual assault victims are one of the only crime victims that are required to pay for their own evidence collection. Fortunately, there are two funding sources that a person can use to help pay for the treatment and exam. One of these sources is called the SAFE fund, which stands for Sexual Assault Forensic Exam. The SAFE fund can pay for the exam if the victim/survivor does not want to report the assault, cooperate with the criminal justice system, or use their personal health insurance for privacy reasons. Unfortunately, the funding for this program has not been stable and has not always been available.

One of WCASA's (Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault) top priorities of the 2006-2007 legislative year was to ensure the availability of SAFE funding. In March 2007 WCASA and WCADV (Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence) held a sexual assault and domestic violence lobby day. This was a day when advocates and concerned citizens went to the state capital to talk with their senators and representatives about laws and issues that relate to sexual assault and domestic violence. Two of our staff members, Vicki Biehn and Lora Schultz Reinders participated in the lobby day. One of the issues we discussed with our representatives was providing a secure funding source for the SAFE fund.

This goal was achieved when Governor Doyle signed this bill into the state budget on October 26th, 2007. When the Governor signed the bill, SAFE funding was made a permanent part of Wisconsin law. The SAFE funding is a sum sufficient program, which means that there will always be funds available for this program. It is unfair for victims to have to pay for their own evidence collection, and the SAFE fund ensures that they will not have to. The signing of this bill was a great success for WCASA and all of the victims of sexual assault in Wisconsin.

We have more great news for sexual assault survivors from the legislature. On December 11, 2007 the State Assembly voted 56-41 to pass AB 377/SB129, which is the Compassionate Care for Rape Victims bill. This bill had already passed the State Senate. The Assembly bill had a technical amendment so it will need to go back to the Senate for another vote in early January. This bill makes it a requirement that hospitals in the state of Wisconsin provide accurate information about the morning after pill (Plan B) and to dispense it upon request to sexual assault survivors. The morning after pill is a safe and effective, FDA-approved method of preventing pregnancy after unprotected intercourse. The morning after pill will not affect an established pregnancy and is not the same thing as RU-486, which is also known as medication abortion. In 2000, The American Journal of Preventive Medicine estimated that 25,000 American women become pregnant

every year as a result of sexual violence and that using the emergency contraception or Plan B could prevent 22,000 of those pregnancies. Thank you to all those who have worked so hard to pass these two important bills that assist sexual assault survivors in their healing process.

— Vicki



Teen + Vice: Acting Up for Community Change

Those who think all teenagers are self-centered, lazy, and lacking motivation would change their minds after attending a meeting of Teen + Vice. The members of T + V (which stands for Teen "Ad-Vice") are anything but unmotivated, and they are working hard to make their community a better place.

This group of Burlington area middle and high school students meets twice per month at Burlington High School. During meetings, the teens brainstorm ideas, then get up and act them out. Their original skits are all about issues facing real teens today and include topics like cutting, sexual violence, teen suicide, bullying, teen pregnancy, rumors, dating violence, and much more. Once skits are performance ready, the teens take them on the road, and share them at other schools, community meetings, and awareness events, including Sexual Assault Services' own Take Back the Night.

T + V has several adult moderators to supervise the group, but it really does belong to the members. The teens are responsible for coming up with new ideas and keeping themselves on track. The adults are just there to support the group, to answer questions, and to be "experts" on some of the topics that are addressed in skits. Moderators include representatives from the Burlington Police Department, the Racine County Victim/Witness office, and Sexual Assault Services.

T + V is always seeking out new members and new ideas, so if you know a theatrical and community minded teen, please invite him/her to attend meetings of T + V. All are welcome! The group meets on the first and third Thursdays of every month from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at Burlington High School. The group usually meets in the cafeteria and then moves into the auditorium or the library to work.

Any questions about this unique volunteer opportunity can be addressed to Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org.

SAS Wish List

- Volunteer Advocates!
- Gift cards/certificates from Target, Office Depot or other discount stores
- Courage to Heal book series
- New clothes for victims at the hospital (t-shirts, sweat pants, underwear, etc.)
- Gift bags filled with body lotions & shower gels to be given to victims at the hospital
- General art and craft supplies



Helping Hands

By Samantha Sustachek

At Sexual Assault Services, we pride ourselves on having a fantastic group of volunteer advocates, so in this edition of *Branching Out*, "Helping Hands" would like to spotlight our longest-standing SAS volunteer: Curt Pruitt.

Curt holds the distinction of having been with our volunteer program since it began in June of 2000. He was among the first group of volunteers to be trained to answer the crisis line and respond to the hospital, and he has been with the SAS program longer than any current volunteer or staff member. That is quite an accomplishment! When asked how he found out about the program and what made him join, Curt responded that a speaker came to his church one Sunday morning and described some of the statistics regarding sexual assault. Those statistics made him aware of the possibility of one of the women in his life being assaulted, and he "felt it would be good to know how to support or respond to them or others."

SAS volunteer advocacy definitely has its ups and downs, and Curt's experience has been no different. He finds the job most rewarding when, weeks after a visit to the hospital, he discovers that his support and presence were appreciated by a survivor. Helping survivors at the hospital is also Curt's biggest challenge as an advocate. He acknowledges that "helping survivors is what I've 'signed on' for. Yet, I occasionally find myself grateful when my shift ends and I haven't gotten called in to the ER. Then, I wonder if a victim, perhaps, went unserved by our organization."

When asked about his family, Curt explains that volunteering is a part of his family culture, and both he and his wife, Susan Lange Pruitt, model that value for their children. Perhaps someday they will become our next generation of SAS advocates! For now, though, they support their dad's volunteer efforts. Says Curt, "It's interesting to note that, when the SAS phone is with us in the car or at home, the kids treat it as though it's the "Bat Phone". When it rings, it becomes the most important event occurring at the time. All bets are off if Dad needs to go to the E.R. And, in all these years, I don't recall a single self-centered response when plans have changed without notice."

When he is not generously donating his time to SAS or another community organization, (Curt describes himself as a "chronic joiner" who has been involved with everything from the American Heart Association to Family Service of Racine to the Chamber of Commerce) Curt works as the General Manager of, and an investor in, Regency Mall. He is also "a staunch supporter and starstruck groupie of PBS's *Antiques Roadshow*," and loves new experiences of all kinds. If he ever becomes independently wealthy, expect to find him taking college classes constantly. He says he loves "learning about new developments, unfamiliar cultures, just expanding my awareness, in general!"

Curt believes that in order to be a good SAS advocate, you must have "a willingness to rise above your opinions, prejudices, or whatever feelings you may have about another person's choices and to value and respect them when they need it." He feels that "this service and this topic (sexual assault) has 'ick' written all over it. Yet, it's a mathematical probability that every family will deal with it in some way. I feel it's important to discuss options, to stress the worth and dignity of every living person and to make sure adults and children alike know that you provide a safe refuge (if you truly do) for their questions, feelings, insecurities and, sometimes secrets."

Curt has been doing just that for the SAS program for over seven years now, and we are honored and grateful to count him among our volunteers!

— Sam

SAS Fourth Quarter Statistics October—December 2007*

Crisis Line Calls.....	47
Racine Hospital Visits.....	12
Burlington Hospital Visits.....	4
Legal Advocacy Sessions.....	15
New Counseling Clients.....	20
Counseling Sessions.....	136
Community Presentations.....	22

* As of publication date

Save the Date!! 5th Annual Take Back the Night

Racine's 5th Annual Take Back the Night will be held on this year's National Day to End Sexual Violence: Thursday, April 3rd 2007. The event will be held from 6:00- 8:00 p.m. in DeKoven Center's Great Hall.



The event will include a keynote speaker, an open mic speak-out, a candle-lit vigil and march, The Clothesline Project, a performance by Teen + Vice, food, drinks and other activities.

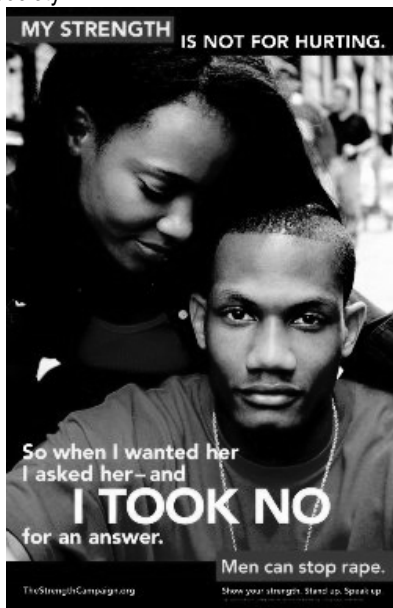
Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend this free community event. So mark your calendars now and show your support as we work to end sexual violence in our community!

Western Racine County Corner

By Vicki Biehn

In this section of our newsletter I am going to update you on what is happening in the Western part of Racine County. As many of you know, Sexual Assault Services is committed to providing services to victims in rural Racine County, and does this through our Rural Outreach Office located in the Love, Inc. building in Burlington. This month I would like to tell you about a primary prevention campaign that the Western Racine County Family Violence Coalition (Coalition) is working on. The Coalition is a group of individuals and agencies that meet once a month to work toward developing, nurturing, and sustaining a community free of abuse and violence. The Coalition's goals are to develop sensitive and effective responses to survivors, promote and develop practices that hold perpetrators accountable for their actions, increase community awareness of abuse and violence issues, provide opportunities for collaboration between service providers and improve access to appropriate services.

In January of 2007 the Coalition decided to focus its goals for the upcoming year on primary prevention. First we educated ourselves on the theory and concepts of primary prevention, and then discussed various primary prevention initiatives the Coalition could support. We ended up purchasing posters from two different organizations that work towards primary prevention. One of the organizations is Men Can Stop Rape (www.mencanstoprape.org). The Men Can Stop Rape posters all have the following slogan: "My Strength is Not for Hurting, so when ..." followed by various tag lines such as: "So when she wanted me to stop, I stopped," or "So when I wanted to and she didn't, we didn't" and "So when I got mixed signals, I asked what she wanted." The statement "men can stop rape" is at the bottom of each poster to complete the message. These posters address some of the attitudes surrounding sexual violence that contribute to the sexual violence in our society.



A poster from www.mencanstoprape.org

The second group of posters the Coalition purchased is from the Date Safe Project developed by Mike Domitrz. Their website is www.canikissyou.com. This set of posters also provides a positive message about asking for sexual consent. This set of posters encourages people to respect others' boundaries and to ask for permission before there is any sexual contact. These posters have various tag lines such as: "Don't guess with my body-Ask Me" or "If You Want to be With Me, Respect My Boundaries, Ask First." All of these posters end with the statement "Respect Your Partner, Get Consent, Ask First."



A poster from www.canikissyou.com

The Coalition is distributing these posters to various locations throughout Western Racine County. We have already placed them in all of the bathrooms in Burlington High School, at Waterford, Union Grove, and Catholic Central High Schools, as well as at the Southern Lakes Consortium Alternative High School, and the Burlington Police Department. We are also working to have them placed in some local bars and at Gateway Technical School.

The Coalition is working hard on our mission to end violence in our community. If you would like to have a poster displayed at your school, workplace, church, or other location please give Vicki a call at 262-763-6226 ext 31 or e-mail at vbiehn@lsswis.org and I would be happy to give you one. It takes the whole community to end sexual violence.

New Group For Teen Survivors

Sexual Assault Services will be offering a therapy group for teenage girls who have been sexually abused or assaulted. The group is scheduled to begin in late January and will meet weekly until April.

Groups can be especially helpful for teens because teens often look to their peers for support, and being with others their age helps to normalize their feelings and experience. The group will consist of a variety of activities including talking, games, art activities and more.

If you know of any 13-17 year old girls who have experienced sexual assault or abuse and may benefit from a support group, please refer them to our office at (262) 619-1634 to schedule an orientation session.





Sexual Assault Services
1220 Mound Ave., Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404

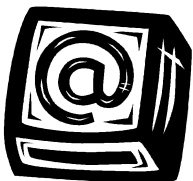
Contact Us!

SAS Racine Office
1220 Mound Ave. Suite 304
Racine, WI 53404
262-619-1634

SAS Burlington Office
480 S. Pine St.
Burlington, WI 53105
262-763-6226 Ext. 31

24 Hour Crisis Line: 262-637-SAFE (7233)

Stay Connected!



Join our News and Events email update list! Would you like to receive information on upcoming SAS events and volunteer opportunities? Email Samantha Sustachek at ssustachek@lsswis.org with "SAS news and events" in the subject line and she will include you in all SAS news and events related emails.

Sexual Assault Services seeks to create a safe and compassionate environment to help promote the healing of sexual assault survivors and their support people.

